

Annual First Steps Family Survey

Statewide Summary

Mailed out by CFO April 2008

Total surveys mailed out: 3163

Number of surveys returned: 997

1. How old is your child?				
143 (14.34%)	294 (29.49%)	490 (49.15%)	65 (6.52%)	5 (0.50%)
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer
2. At what age did your child first begin receiving First Steps services?				
552 (55.37%)	243 (24.37%)	176 (17.65%)	0 (0.00%)	26 (2.61%)
Less than one year	1 yr - less than 2 yrs	2 yrs - less than 3 yrs	3 years and over	Did not answer
4. It was easy to learn about First Steps.				
400 (40.40%)	469 (47.37%)	86 (8.69%)	32 (3.23%)	3
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
5. It was easy to find out if my child was eligible for services.				
428 (43.15%)	490 (49.40%)	52 (5.24%)	20 (2.02%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
6. It was easy to obtain the services that are needed for my child and family.				
417 (42.08%)	460 (46.42%)	71 (7.16%)	38 (3.83%)	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
7. No unnecessary services were included in the IFSP.				
513 (51.82%)	442 (44.65%)	10 (1.01%)	9 (0.91%)	16
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
8. When my child was evaluated, all concerns about my child's development raised by me and others were addressed.				
557 (56.26%)	401 (40.51%)	22 (2.22%)	10 (1.01%)	0
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
9. The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understood.				
536 (54.03%)	424 (42.74%)	21 (2.12%)	6 (0.60%)	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
10. I received information and explanations about our family's rights to file a child complaint.				
461 (46.57%)	410 (41.41%)	64 (6.46%)	22 (2.22%)	33
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
11. I received information and explanations about our family's procedural safeguards.				
445 (46.26%)	461 (47.92%)	45 (4.68%)	11 (1.14%)	23
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
12. I feel the service coordinator listens to me and encourages my opinions.				
581 (58.57%)	369 (37.20%)	17 (1.71%)	20 (2.02%)	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
13. Our service coordinator helps my family get the services we need in a timely manner.				
549 (55.51%)	346 (34.98%)	55 (5.56%)	28 (2.83%)	11
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
14. In creating our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), I am asked about areas where our family feels things are fine and where we feel we need help.				
574 (58.22%)	387 (39.25%)	11 (1.12%)	5 (0.51%)	9
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply
15. We receive all the services listed in our Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).				
566 (57.35%)	368 (37.28%)	28 (2.84%)	11 (1.11%)	14
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

16. All the services I felt necessary were included in the IFSP.

561 (56.84%)	376 (38.10%)	30 (3.04%)	13 (1.32%)	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

17. First Steps service providers were effective and knowledgeable in working with my child's disability.

582 (58.91%)	350 (35.43%)	27 (2.73%)	17 (1.72%)	12
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

18. I feel the First Steps service providers listen to me and respect my opinions.

607 (61.25%)	355 (35.82%)	19 (1.92%)	8 (0.81%)	2
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

19. First Steps services give my family the tools to directly improve my child's development.

574 (58.10%)	370 (37.45%)	25 (2.53%)	9 (0.91%)	10
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

20. The services included in the IFSP were explained so that I understood them.

556 (56.33%)	410 (41.54%)	14 (1.42%)	4 (0.41%)	3
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

21. I believe the services my child and family receive are appropriate and necessary.

613 (62.11%)	355 (35.97%)	14 (1.42%)	5 (0.51%)	0
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

22. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings are scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for me and my family.

618 (62.55%)	344 (34.82%)	14 (1.42%)	6 (0.61%)	6
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

23. Over the past year, First Steps services have helped me and/or my family:

a. To participate in everyday routines even though we have a child with special needs.

457 (53.33%)	366 (42.71%)	27 (3.15%)	7 (0.82%)	119
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

b. Feel more confident in my skills as a parent/guardian.

492 (52.90%)	408 (43.87%)	24 (2.58%)	6 (0.65%)	52
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

c. Understand my child's needs.

510 (53.57%)	409 (42.96%)	27 (2.84%)	6 (0.63%)	27
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

d. Be more optimistic about my child's future.

540 (57.26%)	375 (39.77%)	21 (2.15%)	7 (0.74%)	35
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

24. Since being part of First Steps, I can work with professionals.

445 (45.97%)	391 (40.39%)	18 (1.86%)	8 (0.83%)	106
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

25. Since being part of First Steps, I know how to advocate for what my child needs.

474 (48.32%)	412 (42.00%)	40 (4.08%)	6 (0.61%)	49
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

26. Our family is better off because of the First Steps program.

620 (62.94%)	313 (31.78%)	24 (2.44%)	7 (0.71%)	21
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

27. Our child is better off because of the First Steps program.

675 (68.81%)	265 (27.01%)	23 (2.34%)	6 (0.61%)	12
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply

28. Approximately how often does your family use the help of your service coordinator?

195 (20.14%)	83 (8.57%)	351 (36.26%)	313 (32.33%)	26 (2.69%)
Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly	Every six months	Annually

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Note: Comments are typed as written on the surveys with the exception of the correction of most misspellings. Names and other personally identifiable information of children, families and providers have been redacted.

I answered "Disagree" on question 6 because it is often hard to find a therapist. I had a hard time getting a good physical therapist and speech therapist, otherwise, services are great.

Please note: Our original coordinator was terrible and would have done a great disservice to our children. Our current coordinator is much easier to work with and I feel our children are really benefiting from First Steps now. However, it was extremely difficult to initiate, even though my children were extremely premature, have Grade III and IV, IUHs and CP.

We are so grateful for the excellent services we have received. Thank you! My only complaint is about the parent cost-share program. We are charged only \$5 a month and if you account for the postage to mail the bills and payments, the paper and envelopes, and the manpower to collect and deposit our \$5 fee each month, it just seems futile to collect such a small amount. Truthfully, I think a family with our income should be paying ten times that amount, minimum, for the excellent services we receive. (I'm not joking. :-)) I think families would take more ownership if it cost them a little more. At a minimum, payments should be collected in a lump sum for the whole year, or six months at a time, so the fee isn't cancelled out by the cost of collecting it. Just a suggestion.

This program is great! In our area they don't have occupational therapists. So they gave us a developmental therapist. It would have been nice to actually have her (my daughter) see an occupational therapist.

To whom it may concern,

My son would not be who he is today without First Steps. I think it is the best program. Our therapists have been with us since he was eight months old and they are his angels. Thank you First Steps.

In the beginning, it was hard to understand the First Steps program. My coordinator did not explain that we need to be our child's advocate. I thought the coordinator would recommend appropriate assessments for our daughter with Down Syndrome. Apparently, I had to ask specifically for assessment AFTER I became familiar with her condition. But, as a parent, you are overwhelmed with finding out you have a special needs child, you aren't an expert and don't know what she needs. I expected the coordinator to be the expert since she deals with special needs cases everyday. Now that we understand the system, all is going well and the services help my daughter immensely as well as our whole family. It just took some time to get the process figured out. Thank you!

To Whom It May Concern:

Susan Luce has been instrumental in giving us the confidence, ability and foresight to manage our daughter's issues. She is a godsend to our family.

I wish First Steps was recommended by my pediatrician sooner. I didn't know it existed. I didn't learn about First Steps until my son's eighteen month checkup with our nurse practitioner. I wish I had been aware of the First Steps program sooner. Is there a way this program can be more widely known to parents that need it? Possibly the pediatrician should keep information about the program and discuss it more often with parents. I really feel the program has helped our son and our family.

We are so very satisfied our therapists. We hope our new speech therapist/OT works out well! God bless!

Our coordinator is helpful, cheerful and accommodating and we could not ask for a more. She is always quick to respond to a concern, gets meetings put together quickly (no small feat considering the number of people on our team!) and is so very optimistic about our son's future! Prior to our move to the country, our city coordinator - also a wonderful person - was a great introduction to this program.

We started receiving services pretty late in our son's life. We got referred to First Steps when he was in the hospital at birth but it took us a while to actually get in touch with someone. We had a speech evaluation when he was very young, but after that the communication stopped altogether. It took a while to get to speak with someone after this. We got referred to First Steps a second time while in the hospital after one of our son's surgeries. Things went pretty well for a while except that we have gone through five different service coordinators since this all began. We have continued to get the speech therapy we've needed despite all the setbacks.

We are so thankful for the First Steps program. In our family one of our incomes was lost in January 2007. If it wasn't for First Steps, we would not be able to get our child the help he needs. Thank you.

Our service coordinator always goes above and beyond to help us with anything we might need - especially when looking for all available resources. We appreciate her friendly and professional manner. Without First Steps, we would not be able to financially afford all the therapy sessions our son needs on a weekly basis. We are very grateful for this program! Please continue to stress the importance of funding this program with DESE.

I am pleased with the progress I have seen in my child since we started the First Steps program. I love the therapists that I have chosen.

We are a licensed medical foster home. First Steps has helped me with many of our special needs children. I don't know what we would do without it in our rural area. Thank you!

We as a family are very appreciative of First Steps and the providers for their excellent help. Just wanted to tell you thank you very much.

The First Steps program was really great in assisting my daughter to independence. She has done a lot of things her doctor's doubted she would do for a very long time. The providers assisted me both personally and professionally. Thank you First Steps.

I am very appreciative for the great therapists that have been working with me and my child. The First Steps program has made all the difference in the development of my child and in helping me to be knowledgeable of the best ways to help him. I also appreciate the interpreting services that has allowed me to communicate and be able to accomplish my goals as a parent.

I cannot say enough wonderful things about the service provider, Hillary and the therapist Meridith. They are GREAT, positive people to deal with. Thanks!

First Steps was a life saver. It would be a great disservice to the citizens of Missouri were we to ever lose this program. First steps empowered me and helped me to cope with my child's disability and is a great comfort in a very difficult time for our family. Thank you.

I found it difficult to understand the First Steps services and know what to ask for in the first IFSP meeting. I believe all parents want their children to meet the "normal" milestones - so the exercise to ask for this is a bit tedious and may be something that can be laid out for the parents to help guide them in the process. I realize all children have different needs, abilities, and areas of concern - but maybe some type of template based on age that could be modified for each child would be helpful. My son has Down Syndrome - so a template for DS children and what developmental milestones are typical for both DS children and typically developing children. Each patient/family shouldn't have to try to figure out what milestones should come next in order to know what to ask for. This is very overwhelming - especially with a newborn and just getting the news of DS or other delay. First Steps is a wonderful program. The home visits by our therapists are wonderful. I appreciate that they came to us. Our therapists are amazing and very knowledgeable. Our service coordinator has been very helpful and accessible. Thank you. P.S. Regarding understanding the First Steps services, it's not difficult to be put in contact with First Steps - but difficult to understand all the services and what to do and ask for a bit overwhelming at first.

Had it not been for our involvement with Parents As Teachers, we would not have known about your existence.

I feel that we had a very good coordinator! We, my family, had moved from the state of Virginia to Missouri. We had told this to our coordinator and he explained that because our son was in early intervention in Virginia doesn't mean he will be put in the Missouri's program, but he will do all that he can to help us. He was the person to come out to meet us and tell us all about First Steps and how the program worked. After viewing the paperwork from Virginia that we had on hand, he told us our son would not have any problem getting into the First Steps program. He explained about the evaluation process to see what our son qualified for and getting a coordinator that will work with us. We had asked him if he could be our coordinator. He told us he could try to get that position but he may not be able to become our coordinator. Well, in short, he was able to become our coordinator. He also helped us get all that we needed to do for our move to the state of Georgia. I believe he should help organize families that are moving into the state of Missouri that have children in the early intervention program in another state and families moving out of the state of Missouri that have children in the early intervention program so it could be an easy exchange of information. Thank you. Sincerely,

I learned about First Steps through our Parents As Teachers person. Had it not been for her, I would not have known anything. Maybe you could have ads in newspapers or simple commercials about the help that is available. We are a low income family and First Steps has been so helpful. I'm sure there are families who do not know about the program that could benefit as we have. Thank you for all of the help.

My daughter utilized cochlear implants to access sound. I don't understand why First Steps does not cover follow-up visits for audiology related to cochlear implants. I understand why the medical aspects are not covered. Why not the cords, batteries, audiology, etc., for the external component. It is not much different than a hearing aid for the external component.

We are very thankful for the First Steps program. Our service coordinator has been a blessing to our family. She is very knowledgeable, caring and helpful to us, and our special needs child. All of our therapists have been amazing. As a team, they have given me the confidence I need to raise my daughter. The support we receive from First Steps help us to meet her needs and overcome every challenge before we get defeated by it. Thank you to all who make First Steps what it is.

I want to thank everyone involved with the program. I don't know where we would be without the services we have received through this program.

April 25, 2008

Dear Miss Jackman,

I cannot say enough about the First Steps program and how much it has improved our family's quality of life. We had so many concerns about our son in his first year of life, as he was missing many milestones typical of others his age. Our coordinator and therapists were extremely professional, empathetic and proactive in observing and determining the best course of action for our son's development. We are very grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of such a wonderful experience. Our son is healthy, thriving, and enjoying life thanks to First Steps. With much appreciation, P.S. Please recognize Eileen Baker for all her efforts and assistance. She has been instrumental in our son's progress.

Our team have been such a wonderful help to us. They are just like part of the family. Our son has grown close with them and enjoys their visits. We did have some trouble with one person. She was not very dependable as a fill-in for Linda while she was gone.

First Steps was a very good idea in the beginning. However, it took a long time for anyone to even contact us. Not to mention to even arrange a time for someone to come out. After the meeting had been set up, things were looking up. The woman came out right after speech therapists and physical therapists came out. My son was naturally tired and wore out but she assessed him still. She shouldn't have assessed him while he was so tired. He was able to do a lot more than what she had seen. Also, she almost dropped him. My son was only three months old at the time - he wasn't difficult to handle. I can understand if she was nervous but if she can't hold onto an infant of 3 months then maybe she shouldn't be working for First Steps. She came out one time and hasn't called or come back since. What good is the program if my son doesn't get to use it?

First Steps has made all the difference in our son and our life. We could not do without it!

April 14, 2008

This program is absolutely amazing. I know that we are definitely better (stronger) parents and our child is receiving the direction she needs (and deserves) with the First Steps program. Thank you for all that your organization does to assist and support special needs families. We are so very lucky. Sincerely, A proud First Steps mom.

We only had one visit with the therapist so far, so it is kind of hard to know how to answer all of the survey.

Everyone is very professional and helpful. My occupational therapist is outstanding. Thank you for all the help with our son. First Steps was instrumental in his success with strengthening his right side of his body.

Thanks to the First Steps program, my son can do everything the doctor's said he couldn't (crawl, walk). Thank you.

I was very impressed with the program at first in St. Louis City. My coordinator called and followed up and stayed up to date with my child and her services. When we moved to the county, I had to contact them and haven't heard from them at all, besides her six month review, which happened at eight months, because I called about it.

The one area of concern for me is once you initiate a new service or consult it seems to take a really long time for the person you are making the appointment with to contact you, then it seems like the first available appointment time is a long way off. It seems to waste a lot of valuable time for the child.

It is very difficult to find providers in Lincoln county. There are not enough in each category - speech, occupational, and most especially, ABA. I still do not have enough providers for ABA to fill all the hours I was provided for my son and nothing is being done to help us find any.

My son's First Steps team has been a real blessing. They are a pleasure to work with, and have an excellent understanding of the challenges that need to be addressed for my son. His team of therapists is fantastic too - knowledgeable, friendly, encouraging and extremely talented. They have been great teachers and supporters. They have helped my son (and my family) reach its full potential.

We are thrilled to get help with our foster son. He is showing improvement all the time. Everyone has been nice to work with. We had a service provider for speech who was great but stopped coming to see us. We called our coordinator to get someone else to help us out it took a little bit but we are happy to get a new speech therapist for him. Thanks.

Question 28: Service coordinator is used as needed, not necessarily every month, more like every two months.

Before leaving Children's Hospital in St. Louis we were told about this program. I am so glad that it was recommended there first versus a phone call when we got home. The nurses explained the program and it sounded like something that could and has benefited our child/family. We would not be able to afford this program if it cost us money - we are very thankful that the services are provided without paying after my/our insurance payments. (tax form) After our long hospital stay with our child, this has been so warm/welcome by your staff. That, we so appreciate. God bless

This program was not as advertised.

The First Steps program has really helped my children and myself and my husband. We think it is an excellent program.

More services are needed to help children in the Laclede county area. My child did not receive all the necessary therapies in Laclede county and was and is still in great need of all the therapies provided/offered. Most therapies were only available if we were able to go to a facility and with my child's special needs and health problems that was not an option. Therefore, he had to do without.

Our service coordinator was exceptional. She was always prompt and professional. I am so thankful for the services we received in our home! How convenient. Thank you.

To Whom It May Concern: I just want to say "Thank You!" I feel so fortunate to live in a state/country who provides the help my child needs to reach his greatest potential. It is not easy accepting you have a special needs child but with the First Steps program I do not feel alone. Everyone has been wonderful and easy to work with. Thank you for putting my tax dollars to work to positively help my son and family.

Our therapists are exceptional.

It was very difficult finding out about First Steps. With a first child, we hadn't heard of it before and I can't remember anywhere I have seen or heard it advertised. I found out about it through a friend. Actually, almost too late. My child barely made it in the program before his third birthday.

I do feel that First Steps has been an absolute gift to our family. Thank you for your support and guidance. I do have two concerns:

1. Why does the program end at three years and school does not start until around five years of age. I feel like there is a gap in coverage.
 2. I am unsure as to how services are determined to be covered. We are responsible for quite a bit financially that I believe First Steps should cover.
- Again, thank you for all you do.

I heard about First Steps from my neighbor and called. My PAT interviewer was nice and thorough. My initial meeting with the service coordinator's for my son's IFSP was not beneficial to my son at all. The importance of this meeting was not stressed at all. My husband was not even present because I didn't understand. At that meeting, my son was given one hour of speech and one hour of OT every other week. I had no idea of the importance of early intervention because it was not explained at all. I was so distraught about his diagnosis, I felt paralyzed and suicidal. Thank goodness I got myself together enough to read some books and learn the importance of early intervention and increase the hours. I called the Regional Center. The man I spoke with appeared to care about my child and helped put my fear aside and become proactive in my child's care. I knew he needed a facility and home care in order to make the progress he needed. What I am really saying is when your child is given this diagnosis, in order to learn how to help him, each person needs to have someone explain all the options to figure out what's most fitting for the family. Thanks.

Everyone has done a wonderful job helping me and my daughter. I am very happy with everything they do. Keep up the good work.

Thank you so much for the First Steps program. Our son has made so much progress with all of the help from the therapists. We will definitely miss all the people and support from the program when he turns three this summer. Thanks again, I don't know how we would have made it without First Steps.

Questions # 12, 13, 22 and 28: Service coordinator has not contacted us at all. Even after service provider requested it months ago.

Q#4: Social worker in the hospital suggested the program. Q#5: Some discrepancy between cleft lip and cleft palate eligibility. Q#6: Sometimes caseworker carries too many cases. Q#8: "When my child was evaluated, all concerns about my child's development raised by me and others were addressed"...and more. Q#9: Speech evaluation was not given to me for eight months. Q#10: Not sure. Q#13: Dropped the ball on speech.

The ladies that come into my home and help my twin girls and I are wonderful. I am very thankful for this service and couldn't have ask for a better team! Thank you.

The ladies from First Steps who come to my home to work with Tatiana "Frankie" Lane come to be friends as well as professionals. They are always able to advise me on her needs and show me exercises to help her.

First Steps has been incredible for my son. He has made remarkable progress due to the advice, services, and therapies performed by and taught to us by our therapists and service providers. My son will have a much better life due to the early interventions of the First Steps program.

The therapists who work with my son are wonderful and he loves them (he even cries when they leave). The coordinator who first helped us become a part of the program worked very hard to have my son's needs met. After we were placed, however, Judy Hanway resisted our preference for physical therapy and brought up other children who needed the therapist's services more. Though I felt this was unprofessional (and now, several months ago) it is the only negative experience we have had. Overall, I am very grateful for the professionals who are helping our family.

The physical/occupational therapists who are working with my son are amazing. He would not be where he is at without them.

I do think goal setting helps out a lot. Also, tracking the goals that are accomplished.

The speech therapists need a lot of work with showing up on time and listening to what the parents want. Sometimes it's okay if they are a few minutes late, but an hour and a half hours is ridiculous.

I have an extremely hard time getting hold of her. It has been four to five months and still no visit. The service coordinator is supposed to check in with me on a monthly basis. But, they never have shown up. I try all the time to get her out here but with no luck.

The team assembled for our daughter is priceless. Our daughter has been diagnosed with a rare brain condition and we do not know if she will ever walk, talk, crawl, etc. and First Steps and all the therapy has given us hope. I was invited to a First Steps meeting and I met many people dedicated to helping children with special needs. Some of the district's school early childhood locations I have visited are very helpful too. We need to identify these kids early and continue to get the family the help they need to make these kids as independent as possible. Thank you

My experience with my service coordinator has been disappointing. He is not timely in returning email and phone messages. He did not seek the service that I asked for at six months. At twelve months, I voiced my goals for our child and he would not include it in the IFSP and was talked into an evaluation. Once the evaluation confirmed need for the service, it still took five months to begin. We have also been disappointed in our occupational services. We changed once and loved the newly assigned occupational therapist, but she moved and we have not been pleased with her replacement. I have requested another new occupational therapist, but have not gotten one yet. Our service coordinator said he's having a hard time finding one.

The first service coordinator my daughter received was not helpful. She was initially not receiving any services. After speaking to other moms whose children had a disability and were receiving services, I called my coordinator and she told me that I had stated that I had no concerns so I wasn't receiving services. Well, of course, I had no concerns because my baby was only a month old and she was doing everything she was supposed to be doing; eating, sleeping and using her bowels. The coordinator should have been more straight forward and explained all therapies to me and why I would need them. Our current service coordinator approves all services our daughter needs and is great about it. My only issue is he is very slow to return calls and come meeting/evaluation time the therapists have very little notice of the meeting date.

My daughter is not special needs, but premature.

The occupational therapist that is working with my children is amazing. They would not be as far along as they are without her.

This is a wonderful program. I am so glad it is available to help my son. I have been given many ideas that I have used with him. He has developed skills more quickly than he would have without this program. I'm also glad to know what is available for him in the future, when he starts preschool.

Your program is a blessing! Thank you so much for maintaining the best of care. Your employees are the cream of the crop!

Only one complaint: Service coordinator didn't follow up until a month after I met with the service provider. There seemed to be very little communication between the coordinator and the provider.

My son's speech is now at 24 months this Friday and approaching normal. He has blossomed in the last month; I believe due to addressing his ears - hearing - we are on our way. He is active, intelligent and inquisitive!

We are extremely satisfied and grateful for the First Steps program. Our experience with getting services went very smoothly thanks to our intake coordinator. All of our son's therapists are amazing and, most importantly, he has made terrific progress! Our current Regional Center case worker/service coordinator is also excellent to work with. We are very happy that we live in Missouri so we can take advantage of the First Steps program!

I just want to thank First Steps, our service coordinator and all my child's therapists for being here for my child and me, helping me learn more about my child's disability. Thank you all so much.

Some of the therapists treat me in an insulting manner.

The reason I answered questions 4, 5, and 6 in the "Strongly Disagree" column is because I had to seek my own help for my child. Our PAT program had never even heard of First Steps. The only reason I knew about the program is because my sister is a teacher and she told me. I basically informed the PAT program that my child was going to be in First Steps and took it upon myself to do this. Once in the program, everyone has been wonderful. I love First Steps and only wish more kids in our area could have the opportunity to benefit from this program. I feel it starts with your local schools and setting them up to date on what your program is. Thanks for everything you have done to help my child.

I've been impressed with all people associated with First Steps and appreciate their professionalism and expertise.

We love the services we received. Our daughter's physical therapist is fabulous and always very attentive! She has fun ideas that address our daughter's needs and that she enjoys. We are so thankful for the First Steps program.

Our service coordinator and therapists have all been amazing. They are flexible, understanding and helpful. Each of them provides encouragement for us and great care for our foster son.

Debbie Rogers has been a wonderful Service Coordinator. She has listened to our needs and helped meet the needs of my child.

I can't wait to be done with First Steps. The program is great for parents who can't shell out \$70.00 per therapy session. But I can't stand the stupidity of my intake coordinator. I literally call her boss on her cell phone whenever she has no idea what she is doing or I need a question answered truthfully. She has been great but denied giving me another intake coordinator when I asked her. The coordinator lied about having an occupational therapist for my son. I ended up calling her boss crying because my son was so out of control and I had already been waiting for two months. She investigated and found that no one was pursued for occupational therapy. I went and interviewed my own occupational therapist because my coordinator didn't help, and found someone to take on my son for occupational therapy. Then, the coordinators boss found out and asked me to talk to a director from another agency to see if I would give them a try for OT. The director told me the history and as much about programs/resources and First Steps. I have been pissed at my coordinator ever since. She doesn't know what each therapy does for a child! Time after time I call my coordinator first, then her boss and then call and explain what the boss told me to my coordinator before she knows what to request for (then the boss calls the coordinator to reinforce). The coordinator doesn't know how to do her job or is just lazy. She told me at a meeting just recently with my therapist that she can request things and get on the Matrix at a WiFi at Burger King. My poor therapists are trying to advocate for my son and get things he needs and presently we are still fighting to get things. Still! We have had to do compensatory sessions due to things taking weeks - three months to start. The special school district said that she is a "fruit cake" to work with and they will help my son and I where First Steps has failed. My coordinator is a big pain to deal with and doesn't necessarily follow-up each month to check on us, she calls me back because of a call I've previously put out and she calls days to a week later with some excuse. You sent this survey to the wrong house. I hope to never see this coordinator every again, but it's not possible. I do what I have to do for my son, he is worth fighting for. Please get job training this coordinator before someone else's child is forgotten about. I'm done in four and a half months. Thank God!

All of our therapists were wonderful and we are so grateful for their help.

This is a wonderful program. It has helped us do things for our son, that we could not have done without your help. It helps take the financial stress away, which allows us to focus on our son's progress and future. Thanks

We were not happy with our First Steps coordinator. She never showed up and never kept the right time would not call up to tell us she was not coming and we never signed any papers except for my insurance which would be billed for the time's when she was here. Wasn't First Steps supposed to be better for my child? I hope that you get another letter from another parent that feels the same way that I do.

Our service coordinator was very informative and helpful in understanding everything. Our service coordinator has been keeping in touch each month to see how well the speech therapist is doing and how it's working for our son. The speech therapist she assigned us is phenomenal! (Where's a dictionary when you need one?) Our speech therapist has established a great relationship not only with our son, but our family. I can't say enough good things about them and your program. It angered me that Blunt cut your funding, but our monthly fee is well worth what our son/family is getting! Thanks.

My son's therapist is the best! She and my son have created such a friendship! I will be so very sad when the day comes that we no longer have her coming to help us! She has helped us so much.

Question 12: Has changed twice since we began. Just now getting to know her coordinator.

My concern is not about our experience. My concern, as a professional who refers children to First Steps, is the large number of children who really need services yet do not qualify because of the need for a 50% delay - too many children have to fall to far behind before receiving services - it makes it harder for them to catch up waiting for the 50% delay.

Great program! Staff very knowledgeable.

My entire problem with the system is our service provider - occupational therapist. She does not seem to have the knowledge and/or experience that applies to my child's specific special needs. In fact, I have taught her what I know through my over due diligence. My daughter has Sensory Processing Disorder, the OT seems to only know how to address motor skill delays WHICH IS NOT an issue with my daughter. I have contacted the OT and asked that her supervisor accompany her on visits in the future. As it is, our sessions are a waste of our time and money and are extremely discouraging and frustrating. This is not personal. As a person, I truly like our OT and I think she is a wonderful person. She has been very open and accepting of my requests and concerns. I just feel that there needs to be more expertise and experience across the board concerning Sensory Processing Disorder and how to effectively treat it!

I am a strong believer in early intervention! I am so grateful that we were able to enroll and participate in such a needed program! Because of First Steps, we are able to meet our child's needs in a way we could not have done as easily on our own! Thank you.

We have had such a positive experience with the First Steps program. We feel very blessed to have had such a wonderful program to help our daughter. The therapists were wonderful and I truly feel they all had my daughter's best interest at heart.

Thank you for your transportation services. It is greatly appreciated.

We were very pleased with the program. It operated in a timely manner and we didn't have a lot of "red tape" you see at other places. The OT was especially helpful to us with ideas and approaches that would work for our family. We would highly recommend it to others. Thank you.

The only thing that has upset me is we've had three different service coordinators while we've been in First Steps. I love who we have now and hope it will not change before we are done with First Steps. This is our second time around in this program and we love it!

I would like to thank First Steps for their services. It has helped my child a lot.

I feel they need better qualified people after we talked to the doctor at St. John's hospital. They were not teaching him things he should be doing.

First Steps helped me tremendously. I have three grown children and adopted two boys (ages 3 1/2 and 2 1/2). The 2 1/2 year old had so many problems, I was beside myself. My service coordinator was a life saver to me and I don't know what I would have done. She helped me in so many ways. My son has come along in so many ways and is improving every day. Thanks for all your help and support.

The ladies that my son sees are great in what they do and are the reason people like First Steps at all.

Thank you First Steps! Without the help of First Steps, I don't know how we would have managed my son's disability! We as a family have only wonderful things to say about our coordinators and First Steps.

Our coordinator has been very helpful - calling often to check on my son's progress and providing lots of information for us, including giving us websites with information about his condition. She's also been very patient about letting me rant when I've been frustrated about his condition. Thank you!

We are sad to be transitioning out of First Steps as it has been a fabulous program for our son. Without it, I don't think we'd be doing many of the things we do. Such as: he is now walking (yeah!); he's off his G-tube for the most part, he's attempting puzzles and the list goes on. First Steps was an integral part of my son's first three years. We will miss it a lot. Thank you.

Our service coordinator is wonderful! I don't know how we would have gotten through all of this without her. All of our therapists have provided excellent service and we are grateful to have them as service providers.

I was searching for information about Autism and found out about Birth-3 Year services. I went to the state web page and had some difficulty finding out about First Steps. Now that we use the services I find lots of people who know about it. I wish the information had been in places in use regularly like the preschool. I am worried that when we start early childhood education in the school district that we won't get the communication and education for the adults. That has been one of the best things for us a family. I wish school districts would use some of the First Steps philosophies since they are what helped us have so much progress and success. It helps us feel like an important part of the education process.

How about going green? The survey could be back to back on one piece of paper; and a whole sheet of paper for my address? How about a sticky address label instead. Help save the planet.

Wow! What a wonderful service. My daughter has benefited so much from this great service. Thanks.

I am very glad I found the First Steps program. My son is now talking two-word sentences. Thank you for having an affordable option.

Everyone there is GREAT and are wonderful with my son. I'm glad I feel so comfortable with them as well. Thanks.

Written status from each service provider is very helpful. Not all providers do this and those that do help us to stay focused on what to do between visits. Having a daycare that can help with special needs would be great. All we have found is those that "accept" children with special needs. Assistance with siblings of those with special needs would be helpful so they understand and can help.

I just wanted to say thank you to First Steps. Every therapist we have had the pleasure to work with has been incredible. Thanks again.

My child receives both OT and PT. It was somewhat difficult to start up PT. I was told that OT would overlap while she was very young. I really had to push to begin PT and it turns out she really needed PT. My daughter's OT is somewhat unreliable - cancels and reschedules frequently and not always in a timely manner.

The First Steps program is wonderful! Because of the services of this program, my son's development has soared! The therapists that work with him are wonderful and can get him to do things that my husband and I can't. Without his help, I know that my son would not be doing as well as he is. The services provided should definitely be continued. The only problem that I have encountered is that no one seems to know about it. I found out about it because of a personal contact with our insurance company. That, and the eligibility requirements. My son barely qualified and it was painful to see by anyone that saw him that he was behind developmentally. I believe that the eligibility requirements should be lowered so that children can get the help that is needed before it becomes too late. Regardless of that, I think that the program is wonderful, and it has definitely been a blessing to my family and our lives.

More physical therapists are needed in our area. My son has severe disabilities that would benefit greatly from skilled physical therapists. First Steps has been unable to provide one for our area after months of waiting to hear from First Steps to see if they had found one. We finally found one twenty miles from my home that he has to be driven twice a week. It is a large inconvenience. I know we're not the only family to suffer this inconvenience. Thank you.

When my son and I first began First Steps they were not able to find a speech therapist in our area. I had to find one on my own and use Medicaid which took even longer for Medicaid to approve services.

Our occupational therapists are amazing! They always check on our family and makes us feel as though we are the only family she helps. She is a very caring and compassionate person! Great asset to First Steps.

I think that the parents should be able to get into the First Steps website to see what all of the providers are stating about our children and their development. Especially for the parents that are not able to be at the sessions with the providers.

The population density dictates where the majority of special needs groups are available. Those of us that live outside these areas are alienated by availability to these locations. Information is lacking for families in suburbs/rural areas for others in similar circumstances to form and establish support groups. For example, the nearest support group I have been aware of for approximately one year is 40 miles away. I have recently discovered several families within ten miles of my residence. Voluntary families and information should be available for families seeking it. This is a huge gap in the program. Parents can learn as much or more from daily relationships, as from 1-2 hour a week consultations.

There are no providers for OT and speech in our area.

We are so thankful for this help we have received. We were truly lost and did not know what to do.

Our child aged out of First Steps about 10 days ago. This was an excellent program for our child and the family as a whole. Our service coordinator did an excellent job of locating service providers for our child. We did have a difficult time locating a physical therapist to come to our home. (This issue was the only difficulty we had during our First Steps participation) She was very professional and timely. Our son has greatly benefitted from the program and we have learned a lot about the terminology used by therapists. This assisted us in transitioning him to the local public school ECSE, as well as communicating with doctors and other professionals. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of this wonderful program!

Since starting at the very beginning all persons we have come in contact with have been very professional, knowledgeable and encouraging. Our child has formed a very strong bond with both of the therapists. We feel as we continue services this is going to play a very large part in our child's success.

I feel that our service providers are all very wonderful in what they do and how they work with us. I am so glad to have them help me and my child make the most of his childhood. Our service coordinator on the other hand is not knowledgeable in what she does and continually puts us off when I try to get in touch with her, we have to agree and fight to get what I feel my child needs to help him develop further.

I love the First Steps program! This is my first child and my first experience with low muscle tone. The therapists, evaluators and our service coordinator have been valuable resources for me. As an educator, I realize that early intervention is the best thing we can do for children with special needs. I am thankful every day that my daughter is involved in First Steps.

We have been in touch with our service coordinator more often than every six months, but not as often as monthly. I've reached out to her when I had questions/requests and she has touched back in with me to follow up in addition of the standard six month follow up. We are immensely thankful for First Steps. We learned about it from our pediatrician after our son was born and then were set up after he when he was born but after he left the hospital. Services began immediately. All the therapists have been wonderful and super encouraging. We have seen our son progress by leaps and bounds (though he isn't actually leaping or bounding yet, but with consistent work, we believe he will). Thank you for keeping this program alive and active. God Bless!

The only way I found out about Missouri First Steps was through my parent educator with Parents as Teachers program. It was slightly difficult for my child to qualify because of her developmental delays not being severe enough.

My physical therapist, Gerti Montavalli, is excellent. I'm so happy to have her get me through the difficult time. She's a rare gem."

It's unfortunate that the service coordinators have so many children. Because of this I do not think they can do their job as effectively as they should. I am blessed that my child does not have severe disabilities/delays, however, because of this I don't feel like we are checked on by our service coordinator as often as she would like. I understand her focus needs to be on the more severe cases. In conclusion, if any improvements were to be made, it would be to hire more coordinators so that all families receive the same amount of services from the coordinator.

This is the best program created. Thank you! I am a teacher of 20 years and love what services this provides.

Our First Steps service coordinator is amazing. She is always there to listen and help in any way possible!

You guys are awesome!

Our coordinator is friendly and very approachable. However, her knowledge of the program was limited and during our meetings, she often had to get back with us after talking to her supervisor as her knowledge of the program and our child's need seemed lacking. Her ability to follow through on a task and a decision was also quite lengthy.

I think that First Steps is great! I already knew about First Steps because both of my sons were in First Steps and my daughter's are in First Steps. Keep helping families. Thanks a lot to First Steps and everyone.

Everyone has been very helpful and I feel very comfortable with each person. With the exception of one, my child cry's almost the whole time she is here. She insists on him to sit in between her legs on the floor and she holds him there with some force. He then starts screaming and fighting and crying. He shows an interest in what she has but don't want to go to close to her because she pulls him to her and holds him there. He does not like to be forced to do anything. He will participate but at his speed, and not be held against his will. He gets along very well with the other women. They work with him without force, but work around his independence. Thank you for all help my child gets.

I don't know where we would be without First Steps, but ironically, my son almost did not qualify. I think a 50% cutoff is too strict and that gross and fine motor skills should be considered separately when making the initial evaluation for eligibility. Our son is a true First Steps success story! He has been able to keep up with his typically developing friends with the help of this program. Without the program I honestly think he would still be rolling on the floor. I have two other suggestions:

1. I think service coordinators should call their families once a month to keep abreast of what has been/needs to be done.
2. I think that the aquatic therapy services should be more available. Not everyone can afford to join the YMCA or install a backyard pool to make it a home environment. We have a neighborhood pool that we go to all the time but it's only open for three months in the year. Thank you.

I find it frustrating that the monthly participation fee is based off our income as a family. There is no way to factor in a families financial stability and status basing the fee of yearly tax returns. Although it is cheaper to a small degree by going through First Steps than strictly through insurance, it quickly depleets our HRA Benefits leaving us with no health insurance monies in case of emergencies.

Our first speech therapist was not a good match. After some time, I called the service coordinator and she did not hesitate to match us with a new therapist. We are now very encouraged by the progress our child is making with the new therapist.

I am very proud of the services from First Steps of Missouri. In January, my husband and I took our daughter to CHOP in Philadelphia and the neurologist there said, "You obviously have a lot people involved in this child's life who love her a lot because, based on her diagnosis, she should not be doing some of the things she is." Thank you!

To Whom It May Concern: I cannot even put into words how much we appreciate our son's therapists and RD through First Steps. They have been outstanding in their professionalism and their skills in teaching both our son and me the necessary skills to progress in his development. This program is priceless and we are so blessed to have it available for our little guy. We will always sing the praises of Missouri First Steps. Thank you so much! Sincerely, Lucy K. Gladstone
P.S. I wish I had spellcheck when I was writing this. Sorry for the errors!

First Steps/Regional Center has been critical to the success my son is having. The team that has been established listens to our concerns and addresses them. Our coordinator has helped us find other services (ie., Respite care) that we never would have been able to find on our own. Having a child with a disability changes your whole world, family dynamics included. It is great to have a resource like Missouri First Steps to help find your way.

The only complaint I have is that the two different costs need to be explained at the beginning. I was told that there was a start-up cost, but wasn't explained about \$80.00 monthly cost. Otherwise, services have been wonderful. I am a teacher and appreciate all the hard work and dedication to children from First Steps. I am certainly grateful they have these services provided for children in need.

The service coordinator has been excellent. The quality and professionalism of the occupational and developmental therapists varies greatly. I have been very satisfied with some and very discontent with others. I do feel First Steps tends to over-evaluate and recommend services not truly needed.

Our physical therapist is great. She always explains what she is doing and why and works well with our two-year-old daughter. When our daughter was in the hospital and too sick for any kind of physical therapy, she offered to come visit anyway just to hold her hand and to give me a break. She truly cares for my daughter and is a big asset to the First Steps program. Thank you.

I think a lot of First Steps. It is a very good program for parents and their children in need. We love our speech and occupational therapists.

The main issue I have with First Steps is that when I called when my son was two, I was turned away and told he probably doesn't have enough of a delay for services. If he had been receiving services this past six months, he could have already been talking and would of alleviated our family stress of not being able to communicate with our son. This is the same thing I went through with my now five-year-old son and he has been diagnosed through the school system with "educational autism". One of the main diagnostic criteria used for that diagnosis. So now, I feel like with both of my sons I was told to wait to get them services and they are now basically set up for failure. This is a pretty serious concern and I welcome any interaction that will spare someone else this hardship and frustration.

I advocate for my child. I will never refer anyone to your program. My daughter is not getting therapy because they quit all the time. It is a horrible program for kids because they get no help. My family is better off without First Steps.

My son is doing wonderful. At first, thoughts of Cerebral Palsey worried me because I did not understand. Kristy worked with him every week and wwe have come to the conclusion he just has very high muscle tone. He is now 11 months old and walking thanks to the help and training of First Steps. Thanks. P.S. He's almost ready to graduate already.

Question #24: I am a professional in the community and have actually referred people to the First Steps program. Question #25: I didn't need help in this area due to being a therapist.

Questions #1 and #2: First Steps needs to be told to every parent. The only reason my second child got help so quickly was because my first child was in First Steps. Just put the word out there.

We were extremely pleased with the assistance of our service coordinator in promptly scheduling appointments, developing our plan, and very helpful in choosing providers who would match up with our family. When our service coordinator suggested, providers were not available, using the matrix to choose a provider was overwhelming and it would have been helpful to have more suggestions on how to chose a provider.

Handicapped children need to stay in First Steps longer than three years.

We are very happy that these services are provided to our family and child. It has given us people to talk with on a regular basis about what we are going through. First Steps has been just what we needed!
Thank you.

This is our third child that has used this program and it has been very helpful to and to our kids

I hope no one cuts back on this program. It should be added to "no cutback". My son benefited greatly from the services.

Thank you so much for your services. I am greatly impressed with your efficiency, organization, professionalism and knowledge. My family is so thankful for this service and has greatly benefitted from it. I especially want to thank Susan Waxmen and Kari Done for their service. This department has been very educational and encouraging the whole time. Thanks again!

Our service coordinator was awesome in coordinating the evaluations for my daughter to see if she qualified for First Steps. She was very time-efficient in setting up and getting all the appointments set with all the therapists my daughter sees and receives. I feel she has already accomplished a lot in growth and developing. Thank you for help and support and my daughter thanks you too! God Bless!

I think there should be advertisement or awareness of this program. I could have greatly used this program two years ago with my oldest child.

This program is wonderful! I truly feel we would be lost without the help of this program. Thank you to everyone for what you do. You really make a difference.

The First Steps program has been a wonderful help. The coordinators have been very nice, caring and concerned. Thank you.

I am disappointed that our physical therapist lives over two hours away. We are only able to meet with her once a month. I feel that my child needs services from a trained physical therapist more often. This is an important time in his development.

The physical therapist we had before the one now was NOT helpful at all. She played with toys with him and did not work on walking/steps/exercises to be able to walk with his prothesis. We were very disappointed with her. The physical therapist we have now is wonderful. My son has made a lot of progress since she has started working with him. I am very happy and impressed with her.

Our service coordinator has been a tremendous support for our family. I feel like she always puts the best interest of my child first.

First Steps has been wonderful help for our child. We appreciate all that the program offers.

I had some miscommunication between doctors and First Steps. My son was delayed in entering the program and could have benefited from earlier services. My son is not a typical child, and we had to go about things differently. The case worker and therapy team always found a solution. We changed therapists a few times to find the best fit for my son and always looked out for his best interest. This program has changed the future for my son!

Comment: I feel (strongly) that therapists should have a backup plan (in case of family emergencies) so the child can still receive the therapy they are scheduled to receive as discussed in the IFSP. Example: Our speech therapist had some family emergencies where she was unable to do almost a month of services. (I am deeply sorry that she had the family emergencies) I feel that this time should, in some way, be made up. Have another therapist come for the visit (because we still paid the bill for services NOT rendered) Since it was a timely emergency we should have received a credit for no services provided for that time. I believe this should be looked at because losing over a month of services is a long time to go without the help discussed. Also, therapists should arrive at the time discussed. Unfortunately, ours is late because of the longer time she is spending with the child before and my child does not receive his full time. Sorry, but that IS NOT RIGHT! Please help because this is a great program.

Question 16: I think my son could use more speech therapy. Our first developmental therapist was not very effective and then she quit. I just felt like she was uninterested in her job, but she was very nice. I always find it difficult to keep my son focused for the entire hour of his therapies. I think for any two-year-old sitting still working for an hour is too much. I know with scheduling it would be difficult but I wish we could do 30-45 minute sessions two times a week. I think he would benefit so much more and not get as frustrated. My son's occupational therapist and his new developmental therapist have been great about encouraging my family and giving me a better outlook on his progress. I am really grateful to them for believing in my son and his abilities. I wish First Steps offered parents more information about all forms of Autism treatment. I feel like you are given no help when your child is diagnosed. I think you could provide information about the GF/CF diet, DAN doctors, and other alternative treatments, without advocating them. These parents are desperate for answers and information. First Steps should know about everything related to Autism. April 9, 2008, Dear Joyce Jackman, I am very appreciative of the First Steps program for giving parents the next step in healing their children. It is completely shameful that our government has done next to nothing to address the growing epidemic of Autism. 1 in 150! SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO OUR CHILDREN. When our two-year-old son was diagnosed with PDD, our ten minute appointment consisted of the "dead end" diagnosis that he might get better or he might not and a pamphlet about planning to have our baby institutionalized after we are gone. Needless to say, I left the neurologists office with no answers and an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness. Through other parents of autistic children and our pediatrician I learned about First Steps early intervention programs. I also learned about diet and supplementation programs that have been a miracle in pulling my son out of his autistic world. At the initial IFSP I was shocked at how little the coordinators knew about these programs. I felt like I knew more about ASD than they did in my short time of researching. When I was the one giving the coordinators and even the director of special education my county phone numbers, websites, and handouts on autism treatments I couldn't help but think it should really be the other way around. While I am thrilled with the progress my son has made with his therapy, I think parents of autistic children are given the bare bones of support from the government. The regressive form of autism is rampant. I truly believe if a switch can be turned off it can be turned back on. We need more funding so all these children are getting the optimum amount of services regardless of severity. If there is one thing consistent about autism is that treatments are never consistently effective for all children. Let's make these children a priority because I believe there is a solution to this "dead end" disorder. I have been encouraging parents to call and write the White House asking for the resignation of Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Gerberding must feel it is more important to spend her time denying the vaccination link and avoiding lawsuits than providing reasonable funding and services to the children who are the future of this country. This is America. Can't we do better? But, in the end, I am just a frustrated parent fighting for children who can not fight for themselves. Our service coordinator was an amazing blessing to our family! Each provider that we worked with was wonderful as well. Thank you.

Question 12: Not much contact has been made by my service coordinator. We've only used our service coordinator for services once. I don't feel that question 25 has anything to do with First Steps. I'm sure the service coordinator would help if it was needed. First Steps has helped us financially with speech therapy. I'm sure if I had a question or need the staff could help. I've only talked with the coordinator once when speech was set up. Good program for families. I feel like it is difficult to get answers about equipment for my child.

Our service provider is the nicest and most organized person. She has been a tremendous help and valuable asset to our family.

The service coordinator has been excellent. The quality and professionalism of the occupational and developmental therapists varies greatly. I have been very satisfied with some and very discontent with others. I do feel First Steps tends to over evaluate and recommend services not truly needed.

Thank you for First Steps which provides physical therapy for my child. Thank you also for allowing him to receive that therapy at the St. John's Child Development Center. The therapists are very good and the equipment they provide is outstanding! Also, thank you for covering the cost of braces for his feet, which would be quite costly.

Our provider is a very sweet woman. She works well with my son and he is very excited to see her when she is here. She has done a fantastic job with him. This has made understanding him a lot easier for everyone.

I want to thank the First Steps program. It has been a huge help with our granddaughter. We are pleased with the program.

Our speech therapist comes up once a week.

My son was diagnosed with autism at age eighteen months and we were referred to First Steps at that time. I have attributed our success as parents of my son to First Steps. Our experience has been very positive. I can be open and honest with everyone in the network for my son. Our coordinator has been very helpful and encouraging. My son is getting better every day largely due to the First Steps program. Thank you.

I can't imagine where my little boy would be in regards to his development if it weren't for his coordinator and the wonderful speech and occupational therapists that work with him. This program has been a godsend and we are so very thankful for all First Steps has done for us.

At the time of our son's diagnosis of "severely visually impaired," my husband and I were devastated. We had no idea how to proceed to help him. He was six months old and only rolling over. Within one month we were receiving services and he was sitting up assisted. Within two months he was pushing up to sit and by the time he was 13 months he had taken his first steps without holding on. Since working with First Steps providers, our son has made great strides. His greatest achievements are his fine motor skills, his cane skills and his language skills. He doesn't qualify for speech in our local school district because of the skills our speech therapist has provided him with. He's three and routinely uses 10-15 word sentences! We are so grateful for First Steps. Our son is a testament to what great service providers like our team can do for children across Missouri!

Our daughter was enrolled in First Steps while in the NICU. We are fortunate that she has not required any services since her discharge, but we are grateful and confident that should the need arise she would receive the appropriate treatment and services. I was taken aback when we were first approached in the NICU about First Steps, as my daughter was only three days old. However, in retrospect, I do think it was important that the initial contact information was given to us early.

It is hard to find service providers in physical therapy to come out to our home.

I feel our service providers are very knowledgeable and dedicated to the development of my children. However, I happen to work in the field of early childhood and feel that is what steered me to the right providers. I don't believe many parents would have the resources I have to find good providers in my area and I do not believe the First Steps program monitors the providers well enough to know if they are providing quality services. My service coordinator never sees my providers work with my children and in general, I am surprised at the lack of supervision of this program.

If it weren't for the Parents As Teachers program in the North Kansas City School District, I didn't think I would have known that First Steps existed.

Our service coordinator has been wonderful. I had a few issues with some of the therapists and she worked through the problems with me until the best solution was reached. She is amazing. Our provider is so thorough with my daughter. She has led me to be a better role model for my daughter. I can't say enough good things about her. Another provider had a different view of how to work with my daughter, but she heard my concerns and we were able to communicate to come to a resolution that works best for my daughter. She has been a godsend. She is so appreciated by my family. Thank you First Steps.

First Steps has provided appropriate services for our child, but our school district will not continue these services. First Steps should serve children until they are in kindergarten.

Our foster daughter went from sleeping 19 hours per day, refusing belly time, heavily favoring her right side and having a noticable flat spot, to crawling, pulling to a stand, initiating peek-a-boo and verbally trying to communicate. This was all thanks to an early intervention and our physical therapist. Our team is now focused on a smooth transition back to our foster daughter's birth family. Without First Steps, our foster daughter would not be hitting all her targets and have such a bright future.

Service coordinator needs to dress appropriately. Needs to have a better appearance while working professionally. Not so sloppy! Fixed hair - no wet. Better clothing - not so sloppy. More than just a big t-shirt and pants.

Coordination of times was difficult with the window of available time given to us was limited to only a couple hours a week during work hours. We do have a small monthly amount we pay and missed work for every session. It would be helpful to have better hours available.

I am very impressed with First Steps. It gives our family so much support and help. I couldn't ask for better therapists. Thank you for this program. It changes lives.

#28: I'm not sure what is meant by service coordinator. The speech therapist comes once a week. The other person checks in about once a month or once every couple of months.

The hard part was having to choose therapists with no history of using them before. Getting big stacks of paper to choose from was overwhelming.

Our therapists have all been exceptional with our son. We have seen many developmental gains in him thanks to the visits, as well as the activities and exercises each one recommends. We believe that First Steps has provided our family with a top notch team of professionals and feel blessed to have them in our lives.

We had trouble getting ahold of our local First Steps office initially but since then the program has been great for us.

My service coordinator did an excellent job. The speech therapist and behavioral specialist she found were fabulous. First Steps is a great program.

Our service coordinator was awesome to work with. She always answered our questions in a timely manner. Our family will miss her.

Everyone is extremely helpful and respectful. Thank you!

Our case manager is great about phone calls and listening and implementing our son's needs.

Thank you First Steps. First Steps has been our saving grace. The coordinators, therapists and support we have received have changed our lives as a family. Thank you so much.

My child is diagnosed with childhood apraxia of speech. I wish there was an intense program age 2 and 3 for kids with this diagnosis.

My coordinator is very good. She calls me at least once a month. If I call her, she answers my call right away. She answers my questions and gives me information. She is thoughtful and always polite. When she calls, she always asks how we are all doing if there is anything help me with. She is always there when I need her.

My service coordinator has been excellent along with my physical therapist and my occupational therapist. My son has Down Syndrome and would not be excelling as he has been without First Steps. Thank you.

1.) My child's disabilities are profound and are often overwhelming. First Steps has helped me to understand how to care for her and to help her grow and develop. Thank you. 2.) The only problem I have is that when I need something from my service coordinator it often takes a long time to see any action.

We are grateful for the help in dealing with our son's feeding issues. He is now on the growth chart. Thank you!

I'm very thankful of this program because my son can say "ta ta", "mama", "da da" now. He couldn't say any words before. He's very active, crawls everywhere. Thank you very much.

Our family could not have been happier with our service coordinator. She was honest, dedicated, and incredibly helpful. She always went out of her way to help the families she served. She will always be the "face of First Steps" for our family. As a former special educator and current university professor, the experience my son had in the program has greatly impacted my view of early intervention. The family-centered approach was always at the fore front of the services. I hope the move to a more transdisciplinary model does not negatively impact the quality and quantity of services families receive. The only complaint we have is related to the occupational services. Our son loved his OT but there were countless cancellations, and late arrivals that were not rescheduled. As a result, he did not receive the OT services outlined on his IEP and I believe, based on the billing, were reported as received. The physical therapist was very knowledgeable and always communicated well. We appreciated the scheduling and professionalism from UCP. Thanks for your time.

Q#9: I still don't quite understand his illness, but not at the fault of First Steps. Q#13: Our service coordinator ROCKS! She's the best. Q#18: Once again not First Steps fault, have one service provider, that I don't quite get along with and I feel that she is unnecessary. I feel she belittles me and highly exaggerates certain parts of my son's disabilities.

Thank you for helping me and my family with all the improvements that have been made with my child.

Our PAT parent educator was NOT helpful in guiding us to learn about First Steps. Once our family referred our son for a First Steps evaluation we had a great experience. Our coordinator has gone above and beyond her job requirements to make us more knowledgeable about our son's condition, and has helped us receive the services we needed as quickly as possible. Her support has been outstanding.

We couldn't live without First Steps. We have seen so much improvement in our son. The therapists and service coordinator build friendships with him like doctors or medical therapists couldn't and the difference is profound! First Steps therapists also have a deep knowledge/understanding of how to best work with children 0-3 years old.

Great job!

The only complaint that I have is that I didn't find out about First Steps until my child was one year old. I wish I would have found the program sooner and I worry that other families may never hear about this wonderful program.

The only thing that would improve this is if it were easier to obtain physical and occupational therapy in Scott county through First Steps. However, I realize that is due to a greater need for those providers. The program is wonderful and has made all the difference for us. Thank you so much.

In general, I think First Steps is great! I just think our particular service provider (the lady that comes every month) doesn't have any special skills or adds to our understanding. She's really nice though.

We have had two different coordinators. The current one is excellent. The first one was not getting additional services in place until I called her supervisor.

I cannot say enough good things about First Steps! I don't know what our family would do without these services. Thank you.

I absolutely adore both the occupational and physical therapists who work with my son on a weekly basis. My service coordinator has been wonderful as well. Thank you First Steps for making a difference in my child's life.

Our service coordinator was incredible! She explained all issues both existing and potential and any alternatives. Luckily, we will probably no longer need First Steps as our son had his cleft palate surgery and is progressing extremely well.

My service coordinator is terrible. She does not communicate well. I had to transition my child into the school when he turned three on my own with the school helping me. I have asked for a year and a half to be put in communication with other families, groups, support and NOTHING! I still have one child in the First Steps program. Therapists have told me they have trouble with her too. I love First Steps but do not recommend this coordinator to anyone. Please keep this confidential. Thank you.

First Steps is a great program. I appreciate everything everyone does. My son probably would not be doing as well as he is without everyone's help.

We have switched care providers a number of times due to turn over. The first speech professional we just didn't fit with very well, but the second two have both been great. Scheduling has been our only trouble.

Our service provider hasn't been in our life very long, but with the short time she has been in our life, she has made a difference in our family life. She has worked with us on increasing our ability to stimulate our son's social and physical development. First Steps is very important to our family it has strengthened us just watching our son and the progress he has made. She provides us with support and provides us information and community awareness. Our experience with First Steps is very positive and we do strongly agree on all questions asked on the survey provided.

Our son has several therapists. I have found them to be so helpful. They answer my questions and work well with each other. He has made significant progress; no doubt due to their assistance. Thank you all. We would be lost without our care team.

My son has Fragile X and it was hard for him to qualify. We had to wait until he was very far behind because he did not meet the criteria

I feel the service coordinator listens to me and encourages my opinions, but doesn't get back in a timely manner or I don't get the information I have requested. When I asked for information on a waiver, our coordinator didn't even know what that was. I still have not received any information on it.

My daughter will be two next month and she is still not walking well. Nonetheless, she is only scheduled physical therapy once a month. I am very concerned.

I love and so does Johnathon all of our excellent therapists.

Our First Steps coordinator was supportive to a point - an adult who grew up deaf, I felt the critical need to expose my son to sign language, when I was absent. Friends of mine out east along with their First Steps coordinator approached the program about receiving a language facilitator in their child's daycare program 2-5 hours a day, 4-5 times a week. They were successful in getting this request. When I approached my First Steps coordinator, she was not willing to explore the possibility of getting the same services for my son. I was rather disappointed because RI and MD provide this service under Section C. Now he is fifteen months and is delayed in language. If he had someone signing with him in my absence, he would be communicating more. In addition, our family opted to take the C route for our son. There was no assistance from First Steps to get this for him. We are having to pay 8K for delivering him and now a whopping 12K for the surgery. It's outrageous that First Steps believes in assisting with developing language and speech, pay for BTE hearing aids, batteries, tuition at the oral school for the deaf but offer absolutely NO support in families wanting C. My son did not benefit from B/E's - what choice did I have if you wouldn't pay for a language facilitator (signing person for deaf) or a CI? This defeats the purpose of your mission statement. We live in St. Louis where the community is led to believe children can speak and hear - predominantly oral but offers ZERO support for children younger than three for total communication. If my son were three - he can attend the public school program for this but he will have LOST three years of critical language development. What's wrong with this system? First Steps needs to be creative in ways to get resources for what parents want even if the community may not offer it. I KNOW what's best my child, I'm a deaf woman with a Master's Degree. I was a by product of total communication and for First Steps not to support me in my wants/needs for my child is wrong. Where is the empowerment of parents being able to get services they want for their children. If First Steps could not provide me someone for my son to learn sign language and he could not benefit from BTE aids. Suppose we had NO funds, insurance for CI, there would be very little hope for improvement. You need to rethink the system and think outside the box. It's not a one-size-fits-all world.

Thank you so much for First Steps. My son is a little fighter. We were told so many things he wouldn't or couldn't do. But, through his great physical therapy he has had since day one, my baby is walking and talking.

When First Steps first seen my son he had a four to five word vocabulary and now he never stops talking. He is using sentences. He can ask me when he wants a drink or tell me when he is hungry. My heart just melts when he tells me he loves me. Thank you for all your help! I highly recommend First Steps!

Question 9: The results of my child's assessments or evaluations were explained to me in ways I understand by the therapists. Question 10: I found information and explanations about our family's rights to file a child complaint on the internet. Question 11: I don't even know what procedural safeguards is. Question 13: Regarding my service coordinator, I have to constantly call her back and stay on top of things. Question 15: We did not receive physical therapy. Question 16: Physical therapy was not initially included in the IFSP. Question 17: Most of the service providers were great but, then again, I found most of them myself. Question 18: "I feel the First Steps service providers listen to me and respect my opinions." If by providers you're referring to the therapists, then yes. Question 19: When given properly, First Steps services give my family the tools to directly improve my child's development. Question 20: Initially, the services included in the IFSP were not explained so that I understood them. Now, however, I understand them better. Question 21: Initially, I didn't believe the services my child and family were receiving were appropriate and necessary. But, now I believe they are. Question 22: In the beginning IFSP meetings were not scheduled at a time and place that was convenient for me and my family, but now they are. Question 23b: Through therapy interventions I feel more confident in my skills as a parent/guardian. Question 28: Regarding the service coordinator, it would depend upon the situation. She usually has to ask someone else to get back with me which meant that I had to keep calling her back. I don't know if all the coordinators aren't trained properly or just ours, but they have not done a very good job explaining all of the services they are supposed to provide. The coordinators do not call back in a timely manner and usually are unable to answer my questions or answer them incorrectly. We never receive copies of our IFSP meetings. We have received the last one only at our request when we are supposed to receive copies of ALL the IFSP meetings. Information documented in the IFSP have been incorrect. Our coordinator has not put our information in the computer for the therapists in a timely manner and was rude in what she did take the time to mail to us in regards to services. We are just trying to get our child the best services we can. I can deal with people not knowing things, I can't and won't tolerate not caring.

To Whom It May Concern: I decided to stop receiving the services because of the service provider. She insinuated that my son had ADD and that she would begin trying to teach him to focus on one toy at a time for longer periods. I felt as though she diagnosed him with ADD at 1 year old because he wouldn't focus on any one toy for more than a few minutes. She then decided to begin treatment by keeping all the other toys from him while forcing him to focus on one item for ten minutes. She stated that this would make him cry but it wouldn't be hurting him. In my opinion, she is NOT qualified to make this type of diagnosis nor recommendation. I felt offended and discontinued my services.

Our service coordinator is always professional, timely in her correspondence, and makes us feel as though our case is her only one (although we know that her caseload is probably very full!) She has always been totally prepared for our IFSP meetings and is always available if I have additional questions. She is a great asset to your organization, and we truly appreciate her! Each of our therapists has made tremendous progress with my son. They are outstanding in their fields. Not only are these ladies exceptional therapists, they interact with me as a parent with professionalism, without being too clinical. They take the time to answer all my questions in a way that I can understand. My son has progressed much faster than I would have expected, and this is because of the wonderful staff of therapists at First Steps.

The only concern I have is we hardly get to speak with our service coordinator. She doesn't return our calls in a timely manner. Usually we always have to leave messages that are rarely returned. We are due for a six month evaluation and have yet to get it schedule. Our physical therapist has left a message with her as well and as far as I know didn't her message either. I really love the program and it is benefiting our daughter. Thanks.

We just moved counties and providers and the transition went very smoothly. Our service provider never told me about developmental specialists. I asked about it because a friend had told me about it. The she took several weeks for that specific evaluator to come by. Then the service coordinator took two more months before she set us up with a developmental therapist. She had been really good about everything else, so I'm not sure why this took so long. It is a little frustrating that all the service providers that work with my son don't know each other. That lack of communication can sometimes be a hindrance. I've had a few therapists give me written progress notes, which is very nice to get most of them do not - even when asked. Is there a standard procedure for that? I HATE the IFSP's. They are so vague. I also hate how confusing they are to read. I wish all the old data - old outcomes were deleted after he mastered them.

We have enjoyed working with Elieen Baker. She is quick to turn things around, fair with distributing services and a great representative for First Steps.

I have had only one therapist attend the IFSP. Usually, it's just the service coordinator. I believe if the therapist attended we could have better continuity of care and therapist could discuss options at that point of items/equipment most appropriate for my child.

This program and services have been a life saver for my family and son. We were so overwhelmed by everything, finding out about Down Syndrome and also the services he needed to help him and of course, all the expenses. I feel strongly that I should pay for all the things my family needs but didn't know how to afford all of this. Thank you from the deepest part of my heart. Thanks.

We are so thankful for the First Steps program. It is amazing and I don't know what we would do without it. We have been extremely happy with every part of the program. Our physical therapist and our occupational therapist are a blessing to our family. After the shock of our son's in vitro stroke, it is comforting to know that we have all the resources we need to help our son's development through the First Steps program. Thank you!

The process/evaluation for services does take a long time, and then after having a service approved, it takes another lengthy span for services to actually begin. Also, the baby works better with some of the therapists than with others and has some ongoing health concerns that cause her to feel unwell and is cranky, fussy and sleepy much of the time. Without the therapists of Missouri's First Steps and all their help I don't know where we would be in developmental progress (or lack of). The help and friendships are certainly appreciated. I think all the workers really care deeply for the baby. Thank you.

The First Steps program is wonderful. I do not know how we would have gotten our child to the point he is now without our providers. About seven months ago I started asking questions about his eating habits to our physical therapist and Parent's as Teacher's educator. They both promptly said to call our service coordinator to see if we would qualify for nutritional counseling. Our service coordinator got back to me quickly that we did qualify and worked with me to find a suitable nutritionist. When the first one did not work well with our family, our service coordinator helped us find a new nutritionist. The nutritionist has helped me have confidence in making sure our child is getting good food and the right amount. We are currently working to spread out our visits to less frequent. Thank you.

To Missouri's First Steps Program: Our child is part of your program because of speech delays and the things that occur because of it. Her developmental therapist is a fantastic worker and has a real talent of getting through to our child. Sorry to say almost better than us. We always see an improvement in our child after she visits, which always lasts. However, at the opposite end of the spectrum is her speech therapist. We never see any improvement in our child after her appointments. She seems to only be able to work with children of greater years after they are already speaking. From the adult stand point we have yet to see her at the time she scheduled. We get calls when she is already late to reschedule. She has rescheduled just about every week. I'm the type that if I set a time for an appointment then I'm there, most often early. So far all the others that we have had dealing with are great. Though we are totally sold on Tricia, we, of course, have to say she is a real asset to your program. She is even able to teach our daughter what she needs for her speech. She is versatile, punctual, friendly, and all around great. Thank you for your time.

The turn around for anything new added/subtracted is very long. I have to leave several messages to the service coordinator before I get a call back frustrating because we don't have much time left in First Steps.

Our child's service providers and service coordinator have been excellent. Their encouragement, enthusiasm and professional assistance have helped our family tremendously. Since participating in the program, our child has progressed dramatically. It has been a blessing to witness our child's incredible transformation. Thank you for providing such needed services to families such as ours!

We have a weak service coordinator.

First Steps has been great. Our service coordinator has not. He is very difficult to reach and he does not return phone calls or emails. We need additional services added to the IFSP but he will not call me back.

Although the service coordinators we worked with were very nice, there was a definite lack of knowledge regarding my child's hearing disability and use a cochlear implants. Also, there was a delay regarding the reimbursement of travel which was somewhat frustrating.

Don't understand why when you have twins both don't qualify if one doesn't because of weight but still face the same challenges as the sibling. If the coordinator is there, why can't they access both. Don't agree with the weight restriction because 3 lbs 8 oz is still small and requires sometimes the same help. Because of this, one twin didn't qualify for the program.

My children are premature. I thought that I was going to learn more about prematurity, it's effects, etc. Our therapist doesn't seem to know much about prematurity and thus far all the information she has given me has been very basic common sense practices. Should this be how the sessions continue I will probably stop using the program. Thanks.

We love our First Steps therapists! We get along fine with our service coordinator, but when we need something, I have to remind her over and over to work on getting the service/equipment, and it takes months to receive said service/equipment. Sometimes it seems she "forgets" about us or is too overburdened to take care of things needed.

Still trying to find ways to bring attention to and education on Jacobsen's Syndrome. No conferences in Missouri...closest is in California and no help to get to it.

To Whom it may Concern:

My daughter receives ABA through the First Steps program. At age three she will lose this services that has been the most helpful to her and the rest of the family. To me, this is a terrible situation for my child and our family. She has come so far to only have the services taken away at the age of three, something should be done about this. This is not fair to the child and families. Thanks

We have a physical therapist and an occupational therapist and love them both! They are wonderful. We feel our child could benefit from some assistance in the area of speech therapy for feeding issues but were told that there are too many older kids who aren't talking yet so they won't give him (my son) a speech therapist. Other than that, we are very happy with the program.

Question 28: Approximately how often does your family use the help of your service coordinator? NEVER! First Steps has been wonderful. Easily accessed, prompt, etc. Our speech therapist is truly phenomenal. She seems like family and our 22-month-old adores her. She has been a wonderful advocate and has helped us obtain other evaluation/services we needed. However, she had to do this because our coordinator never bothered with it. We didn't even meet the coordinator until AFTER our speech therapist had helped me obtain a hearing screening and an occupational therapist for our son. After the referrals mentioned above, I requested a new coordinator and only then did the service coordinator contact me. She knew NOTHING about my son's speech problems or about what we needed/wanted. We would NOT recommend her to anyone. Our speech therapist is awesome though!

First Steps in a FABULOUS program. Our son is doing very well and we give most of the credit to our therapists that we saw through First Steps. It is so important to deal with delays early.

The First Steps program has been such an amazing blessing to our family. We feel that our little boy is off to a great start...thanks to the many therapists and our service coordinator. I can't imagine life without them! Our outlook is so different now than a few years ago. Financially, it has been a tremendous help. We would not be able to afford all of these wonderful therapists on our own. Thanks.

I just want to say thanks to Pat and Louise for helping out my son. He is doing a lot better now.

Initially, the woman who worked with my son was so very helpful and concerned with the services our son was to receive. Seeing how she provides for families with children with special needs was so inspiring, considering her own diagnosis. Our son's physical therapist is absolutely wonderful. I can see how much she really cares for him and how she wants him to succeed. She is so good at integrating his physical therapy into everyday life and has great ideas on how to achieve it. She has made it to where me and my husband have never felt "burdened" by his need for physical therapy. She is really fabulous. His service coordinator has been a great advocate for him. She has worked very well with me and my husband and our very busy household.

First Steps is the best blessing I have had in a long time. Mariah and me are very glad you are there for us. Mariah has come a long way. I think Mariah still has some problems. It just seems like I can't get the right answer from her doctors. I'm very concerned because Mariah has such a hard time going to the bathroom when she has to number 2. Sometimes it takes her an hour to two hours before she can pass it out of her. The doctors and I have tried different stuff, but it still doesn't happen. I wish if there's anybody that you know I can get some help from please let me know. I think when she has to go then put the g tube in and leave it out when she doesn't need to. Okay, sorry such a long note. Thanks a lot.

I would like to try to get social security for my son. Recently we've hit a bump in the road and it would really help with diapers, cloths and other things for my son. I also want to thank Martha Sadera and Girti for everything they have done for my son. I see him gaining many strengths from the therapy. You guys are life savers because I don't know how I would have handled this without help and support. Thank you

I feel my child needs physical therapy and have been unable to receive that due to lack of First Steps provider. She was evaluated by a physical therapist from another region 2 a month ago who mentioned if she was her physical therapist, she would like to see her weekly. We still have no physical therapy services lined out. I feel maybe the service coordinator could possibly do more to make it happen. I feel that service coordinators should have a better knowledge of all programs that may be available to participants. Our finances are greatly stressed due to medical requirements. I recently found out about the Lopez Waiver through the sister of our Parents as Teachers lady who is the regional director in another part of the state. So they were nice enough to make the connection for us with the Kirksville Regional Center. Our coordinator just mentioned to me last week that it may be beneficial to us to apply to SSI. Before applying to Lopez Waiver we were required to go to the county DFS office and apply for Medicaid and be denied. While there, the social worker mentioned other help that may be available such as Bureau of Special Health Care Needs. I have been told by two other people that when you are required to travel to receive services that mileage should/could be paid to you by First Steps. Our coordinator has never offered this reimbursement. I feel that this program is geared towards families who don't work. Only one of our providers is willing to come of an evening. With the other providers either my husband or I must leave work, drive 10 miles home, get our child from daycare, meet the provider, then drive back to work. I realize it is possible to just allow the provider to go to her daycare but I feel that leaves us out of the loop plus our provider already deals with enough due to our daughter's needs that I don't want to burden her even more with her therapists in and out of her house because new people, even just when parents stop by, tends to send the other kids into "crazy" mode.

My two frustrations with First Steps are: 1. On the original call, I was told my son would not qualify. It took my PAT educator to assist in getting an evaluation. 2. I feel I had to do research on what my son needed and ask for it rather than being guided on his needs. I am very pleased with First Steps overall. Our family coordinator has been very professional, helpful, and caring. Overall, I am pleased with our therapists. They have educated me on how to help my son and improve his physical abilities.

I have nothing but positive things to say about the First Steps program, the service coordinator and my daughter's therapist. I don't know what we would have done without the First Steps program, it was a lifesaver! Our daughter would not be here where she is today without this program and the very dedicated therapists! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! May God richly bless you for what you do to help these children with this!

I feel my child should have began services much sooner than 18 months. I attempted by calling at around nine months and via a phone interview was told by describing my child's milestones that he probably would not qualify in two areas and then we would have to wait six months to be evaluated again. I should have demanded it at that time, but was discouraged without anyone seeing my child.

We have a caring, articulate, and thoughtful service coordinator. Our son and family benefited greatly from his thorough and clear explanations and open dialogue. He puts a very positive face on the First Steps program.

First Steps taught us many things about our child. We feel as though he progresses due to help that the therapists provided. Our only concern was the lack of available therapists. We were disappointed in the pediatric knowledge of our physical therapist. Also, for several months, we were without occupational therapy due to lack of availability. Otherwise, we were happy with our services provided by First Steps. Thank you.

It took two-and-a-half months to get an occupational therapist. They refused to test for ABA. I said I wanted to file a child complaint and was told it was too late to get the help I wanted. My service coordinator never returned my calls. Many people I privately paid because I knew my child needed an occupational therapist told me that he could use ABA. I finally got a phone call back after five months of phone calls, telling me my public school would test because too much time had past. I did get a developmental therapist for the last three weeks. Anytime I brought up ABA to my coordinator, he would change the subject. My occupational therapist and speech therapist from First Steps even said he should be evaluated. My speech therapist was great! My occupational therapist came extra times to make up for the several months we missed. My private occupational therapist explained most of the questions I had because my service coordinator gave me the run around when and if he called back. We only got results when my husband said he would write a letter to Blunt to get a developmental therapist. I told I needed an occupational therapist in two days because it had been 43 days. I knew First Steps only had a short time to find someone, but, WOW, I finally got an occupational therapist in 24 hours! My service coordinator did not think I knew my rights. First Steps was a great experience except for the service coordinator.

My coordinator went above and beyond her duty. We thank her very much. I have another thing about dress codes. One of our therapists dressed really bad in low cut shirts and tight clothes. She likes to bend over in front of my boyfriend and he is very uncomfortable with that. Thank you.

I just wanted to say thank you so much for this program. You all have some of the best people doing great jobs. My son has come a long way with the help he is receiving. I look forward to seeing so much improvements in the future with the therapist working with him. They teach him and show me things to work with him that is so helpful. The therapists are so caring in the progress of my son. This makes me feel at ease and I think he will some day have a normal and healthy life because of this program and the people you have working there. Thanks

First Steps was awesome to my family and a delight. Everyone, I can't thank you enough. Without the help you gave my daughter, I don't know where she or my son and I would be. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. God bless all of you. You are God's special few! Good luck and we will always be thankful to you all.

I am thankful for all those who helped my daughter!

While knowledgeable about Down Syndrome both the service coordinator and the therapist did not know what mosaic Down Syndrome was. Maybe more training could be provided to them about rare types of disabilities. There is not a lot of awareness about Mosaic Down Syndrome and maybe there should be more within the community of people who work with these children.

I don't know what we would have done without First Steps! Thank you to all who work at and for First Steps - keep up the good work!

Since switching to a DMH coordinator, my impression of First Steps has greatly improved.

My child has Down Syndrome. I think certain therapies should be automatic at birth, such as physical therapy. I don't think any child with Down Syndrome has the muscle tone of a non-disabled child. After the birth of my child, I enrolled in First Steps but was unclear of how it worked. I'm sure I am not the only man who felt very confused because of dealing with having a child with health issues and being told I would need to always be my child's advocate. But, how can I be an advocate of a newborn? What am I supposed to be asking for? Also, it's very confusing to figure out how to find a therapist. The matrix is helpful but overwhelming. I wasn't told that a therapist who does an evaluation cannot provide on-going services. It was easier finding therapists through word-of-mouth. My family is very lucky to have found First Steps. Because of them my son's future looks better everyday. Our only complaint is our service coordinator. She doesn't schedule times and she doesn't try with our son.

I felt it was easy for us to learn about First Steps because we were in the NICU and they made sure we had contact with the appropriate person. However, if we hadn't had a NICU stay and we needed early intervention services, I'm not sure I would know where to look. Also, question 24 makes no sense.